NUMB. XVII.

The Prompter.

To be Continued TUESDAYS and FRIDAYS.

How happy is the harmleſs Country Maid,
Who, rich *by Nature, ſcorns* ſuperfluous *Aid* ;
Whoſe modeſt *Cloaths no* wanton *Eyes invite,*
But, like her Soul, preſerve their native White ?

Roſcom.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7. 1735.

THERE are ſeveral Qualifications that become both Sexes, which do not riſe ſo high as to deſerve the Name of *Virtues*, and yet are not *indifferent* in themſelves. They are like the finiſhing Touches of a Painter (after both Likeneſs and Attitude are taken) which heighten, and add a Grace to the whole, without being, properly ſpeaking, either *Drawing* or *Colouring*. The *French*, whoſe natural Politeneſs ſhews itſelf in all things, compliment them with the Title of *Les petites Morales*, or *The leſſer Virtues*. Among theſe, *Cleanlineſs* is not the leaſt conſiderable.

THE following Letter complains ſo pathetically of a Diſappointment in a Party of Pleaſure, entirely owing to a Neglect of this *leſſer Virtue*, that I can't help publiſhing it, for the ſake of Thoſe among the Fair Sex, who prefer *Finery* to *Cleanlineſs*, and that take more Pains, as my Correſpondent juſtly obſerves, to hide their *Dirt*, than the *cleaning of it* wou'd have taken.

January 3. 1734.

Mr. Prompter,

" BEING of a very gay Diſpoſition, and having " a natural Inclination for the Company of " Ladies, among whom I always endeavour to make " my ſelf agreeable ; I have the Return I expect " from them, and am frequently invited to their " Parties. I was, the other Night, deſir'd to make " one at an Entertainment of Dancing ; and when " my Turn 'came, I ſingled out a Lady that I " thought the prettieſt Woman there, for my Part- " ner. She was neither ſhort, nor tall, but well- " ſhap'd, Black Hair, with a freſh Complexion, " and danc'd extremely well ; in ſhort, I thought I " ſhould have been happy for ſome Hours. I ſuppoſe " you may have forgot the way of theſe Parties, " therefore I muſt tell you, that in my Turn I ſat down " with my Partner, to reſt our Legs, and exerciſe " our Tongues ; but how was I miſtaken ! I ſat " by a pretty Woman, who was quite ſilent, unleſs " I join'd in her Remarks upon the Dreſs of each " Lady in Company : Thinking this ſort of Con- " verſation might ſoon be brought to a Conclu- " ſion, there being but ten Ladies in Company, I " patiently heard all her Obſervations, and was then " going to introduce another Subject ; but I found " her as *skilful* in the Dreſs of the Gentlemen, " and that I was to undergo the ſame ſort of Diſ- " courſe, till ſhe had examin'd and criticized every " Man in Company : This over, I thought my ſelf " happy, and made a ſecond Attempt, but with " the ſame ill Succeſs ; for ſhe then was going to en- " tertain me with her Remarks, how each Parti- " cular *ought* to have been dreſs'd, to have ap- " pear'd, as ſhe expreſs'd herſelf, *Genteel* ; but I " could hold out no longer, and deſir'd to dance, " and took that Occaſion of examining the Dreſs " of one who appear'd ſo knowing in the Dreſs " of others. I don't pretend to find Fault with " what I don't underſtand, therefore ſhall briefly " tell you, her Dreſs was every way fine and coſtly, " and would better have ſuited a *Birth-Day Ap-* " *pearance at Court*, than the *Exerciſe* of a *Dancing* " *Bout*.

" WE had not danced long, before ſhe deſired to " ſit down, when accidentally taking out my Snuff- " box, ſhe pull'd off a *very white* Glove, and diſ- " covered a very *dirty* Hand, and Nails *tipp'd* with " *Ebony :* I leave you to judge whether I was ſur- " prized or no, at this new Diſcovery ; for the " leaſt I expected was *Cleanlineſs* under ſo much " *Finery*.

" WE now grew more familiar, and ſhe would " have made me *happy* in a Converſation *behind*

" her

" her Fan, but that brought her Mouth ſo *near* " my Noſe, that the Happineſs intended, was *greater* " than I could *bear* ; and to prevent her ſpeaking " any more full in my Face, I turn'd to whiſper " in her Ear, but I found from their Appearance, " that it was impoſſible they could have been ſen- " ſible of either Towel, or Water, for a Month at " leaſt ; upon this I gave up my Night's Conver- " ſation, as well as my propos'd Entertainment ; " for you muſt know, Mr. *Prompter*, of all Things " I love Cleanlineſs. The next Dance was very " much in the *romping* Taſte, and my Partner *loſt* " her Handkerchief in a ſevere Fit of *Turning* : This " Accident diſcover'd a very pretty Neck, and a " fine lac'd Tucker, *pinn'd* upon a dirty Shift.

" I TELL you this Story, not from any Deſire " I have of expoſing the Ladies, from an ill-natur'd " way of judging of the whole Sex, from one " *Slut* I had the Misfortune to be link'd to a whole " Night ; but that you may have an Opportunity " of telling them how much more eligible it is, to " appear, and really to be, *perfectly clean*, in the " *plaineſt* and moſt ſimple Cloaths, than to be " found ſuch as my Partner was. I can't help " thinking her at her Toylet, and ſpending more " time in endeavouring to hide, what would not " have taken up Half ſo much, to have waſhed " perfectly clean.

" As I fear it is too natural to judge of us by " the manner of our Appearance, I would adviſe " the Ladies to be very cautious in their Dreſs : " And if they have any Deſign to ſet off the Beau- " ties Providence has beſtowed on their Sex, let " their Covering be clean and plain ; for otherwiſe, " the *Deepeſt Purſe* would make the *Fineſt Woman* ; " whereas *Cleanlineſs* makes even *Raggs* an *Orna-* " *ment*.

I am, Sir,

Your humble Servant,

SIMPLEX MUNDITIIS.

I HAVE too good an Opinion of the Fair Sex, to think it poſſible any one could expoſe herſelf in ſo groſs a manner, and am apt to believe, it is a Picture drawn larger than Life, purpoſely to ſtrike the Eyes of ſome particular Perſon my Correſpondent had in view, whoſe Taſte might not have had a due Regard for that Cleanlineſs he is ſo juſtly enamour'd with : However, as Dreſs takes up a conſiderable Part of the Time of the Female World, a few Reflections on that Subject, in general, may not be quite improper here.

IF we conſider, that the moſt famous Painters always drew their *Venus's*, their *Graces*, their *Diana's*, generally *quite naked*, or at beſt, but juſt *covered* with a plain unornamented *Drapery*, *looſely* and *unartfully* thrown over, a warm *Zealot* for *Beauty* might with Juſtice infer, that it wants nothing to ſet it off, and that the Impreſſion it makes, ſtands in need of no foreign Aid to inforce it. However, Cuſtom having eſtabliſhed the Uſe of Ornament, both *Handſome* and *Ugly* employ it indifferently, the one to *improve* her native Charms, and the other to *palliate* her native Deformity.

IT is generally allowed to be as fair, to judge of *others* by one *ſelf*, as it is to *do* as *one wou'd be done by* : When therefore I ſee a fine Woman, dreſt in the moſt ſumptuous and coſtly manner poſſible, I look upon her without any Emotion, but what may ariſe from the *Glare* with which ſhe is ſurrounded ; but when I ſurvey this ſame Woman in a plain, ſimple, and *unſtriking* Dreſs, without any uncommon Ornaments, but with every thing about her, *properly*, and *becomingly* put together, ſo as not to *confound* nor *dim native Beauty* by *acquired Decoration*, the Impreſſion ſhe makes, ſcarce *touches* the *Eye*, but it *ſinks*, at once, into the *Heart*. The Difference between the *fine* and *well-dreſt* Woman, is that of *Admiration* and *Deſire* ; we *admire* the one, but *deſire* the other.

I SHALL add no more on this Head, ſince Ladies, tho' fond of *Admiration*, are ſtill fonder of *Love*, and if they can once be convinc'd, they may be *admir'd*, without being *lov'd*, but can never be *lov'd*, without at the ſame time being *admir'd*, I dare anſwer for them, if Difference of Dreſs can produce either, they will not want *prompting* on that Head.

I HAVE wander'd a little from the Subject my Correſpondent ſtarted ; but as I can hardly ſuppoſe any of my fair Readers have occaſion to be *prompted* on that Head, but moſt on this, I chuſe juſt to touch upon it, leaving them to determine within themſelves, whether they had rather accompany their Beauty, by their Dreſs, as a judicious Hand does a delicate Voice, or drown it in Splendour and Ornament.

P †

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